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# The Collector and Art Critic

A JOURNAL DEVOTED TO THE ARTS AND CRAFTS, BIBLIOGRAPHY, ETC.

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NEW YORK, April 4, 1905.

My Dear Mr. Preyer:

Referring to your inquiry in your to-day's issue, I would say that Charles Merme was born in 1820, in Cherbourg, and died April, 1869, in Lorient, Dept. Morbihan. He was a pupil of Marilhat, and a well-known landscape painter. Some noted canvases of his are: "The Old Cross in Knascleden, Brittany," dated 1843; "Lenn-ar-roz, in Brittany," 1844; "Springmorn-ing," 1859, now in the Museum at Troyes.

Yours very truly,

THEODORE HEINEMANN.

\* \* \*

NEW YORK, April 6th.

To the Editor of THE COLLECTOR AND ART CRITIC:

I have followed with interest the discussion of "The Tariff on Art" in the last numbers. I don't quite agree with the remedy proposed. I believe that every painting should be taxed \$50, even if it is worth only thirty cents. This will keep the trash out of the country—we have all we want of that. It will prevent the dry goods store art galleries from buying in Paris cheap stuff for 10 to 100 francs and selling it here for as many dollars. Then, further, everything painted before 1800 should be entirely free, and art objects, such as bronzes, enamels, and so forth, should be in the same class.

The protection of art does not exist in any civilized country and is simply ridiculous.

Respectfully yours, B.

J. FRANCIS MURPHY.

J. Francis Murphy is the ideal classic-romantic painter, both in temperament and in practice.

To see fourteen of his best canvases together, as is now the case at the Katz Gallery, is a rare opportunity not to be passed by.

The trait peculiar to Murphy's representation of Nature is his color, which has delicate refinement, often within a narrow gamut. Tints with him have the vigor and vibration of positive colors. And yet he gets away from the actual pigment by the blithe, the airy, the truly spiritual way in which he coquets with his tender browns, and greens, and grays, which is truly ethereal. The sentiment in his landscapes triumphs over color and form and has a sensuous charm.

This artist stands foremost in the ranks of the American landscapists. There is always art, there is always quality in his work—a stream of elegance, a thrill of style, a hint of the unseen. The limpid blue of heaven reflected upon the pale surface of the pond, the russet of autumn leaves, the white mists hovering over the plowed fields in early morning, the gauzy veils which the first sunrays withdraw—all is harmony. Tender music, the skylark's morning song, or the soft vapors which gather and thicken in the evening, as peace and silence descend upon the earth with the approach of night carry the choral psalmody of thanksgiving. Or again, he handles with stronger strokes his brush or plies his palette knife and deeper notes are heard with harmonious result.

If we study two of the last pictures of the artist here exhibited, No. 6 and No. 14, we note these different moods of the artist. In No. 6, "Showers," there is that delicate perception of moist air, the swaying, restless trees take an uncertain outline against the white sky, the movement of the leaves blurs their image on the canvas, and we feel that the artist has seized a moment—and only a moment—and that the scene will pass in the next into some new harmony, wrought by the all-powerful rule of the weather. In No. 14 there is a deeper note, stronger color, more stability—and how consummately right and beautiful are his silhouettes of the trees and their distances as seen against the sky. How well he knows how to draw his trees!

No. 4, "An Old Farm," presents more of a composition with trees and house and pond and field. Color is here. Not enough, indeed, for people who cannot call a man a colorist unless he knocks them on the head with red, blue and yellow. But those who find color in "tones," and brilliancy in the noble realism of atmosphere, are wholly satisfied.

How complete a grasp of the field of vision as a whole, with its logical and consistent rendering of atmosphere do we find in the "Hillside Farm" (No. 2). This is not a topographic study of detail, but of the more subtle qualities of the law of *enveloppe* and values. At the right place the artist knows how to be as precise as a knife-edge, and then again, how to lose and confuse details, as Nature herself loses and confuses them.

Murphy has gained all the suffrages, and is indeed the painter of those who love Nature for her mystery, her poetry, and her charm.